8 Authenticity and Failure in Adorno's Aesthetics of Music

> Scars of damage and disruption are the modern's seal of authenticity.[1]
>
> Adorno
> *Aesthetic Theory*

What does Adorno mean by 'authenticity'? The concept undoubtedly occupies an important place in his aesthetics and pervades his thinking to a remarkable degree, even when the term itself is absent. But as is the case with much of his conceptual framework, his notion of authenticity is never directly defined or addressed, and its meaning has to be inferred from its relation to other concepts. This apparent fuzziness makes it prone to dismissal as mere rhetoric and lays it open to the accusation that it serves no other purpose than to conceal summative and unsubstantiated value judgments on artworks under a cloak of unattributed authority.[2] It can appear to lack a clear identity. Its dependency on its relation to clusters of other concepts becomes obvious enough when one considers claims like the following in *Ästhetische Theorie* (1970): 'The seal of authentic artworks is that what they appear to be appears as if it could not be prevaricated, even though discursive judgment is unable to define it' (AT, 199). This does not mean that the concept of authenticity lacks a strong focus in Adorno's aesthetics, however, and I suggest that it is precisely through the exploration of its 'force field' of related concepts – what Adorno calls, borrowing a favourite term of Walter Benjamin's, its constellation – that light can be shed on this complex and value-loaded term.

In his well-known discussion of the music of Schoenberg and Stravinsky in *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (1949) Adorno identifies

the accepted notion of authenticity as 'being-so-and-not-being-able-to-be- otherwise'.[3] However, it is clear that he is not using the concept in any of its more familiar senses when he maintains that, after Auschwitz, the authentic works are the failures and that 'the authentic artists of the present are those in whose works there shudders the aftershock of the most extreme terror'.[4] Revealed here are the polarities we come to expect in Adorno: On the one hand, authenticity concerns the way a work appears to be what it is because it can be no other way, an idea which contains a range of related concepts, including those of self-contained structural consistency and of totality; on the other hand, pitted against this is the idea that the authentic modernist work is characterized by failure in these terms and that the social and the historical impinge on the apparently autonomous world of the work of art, fracturing its integrity and making its consistency look suspect and ideological in the face of the horrors of the real world which culminate in Auschwitz. Authenticity for Adorno is therefore also associated with a modernist, fractured relationship between the individual and the social, the internal structure of the artwork and the external conditions within which it functions, a relationship which imputes a high degree of self-consciousness and self-reflexivity to the work of art at a structural, technical level. At the same time, it is also necessarily posited on a concept of *inauthenticity*, that is, on the notion that there are works which do not internalize this fractured relationship, which are not self-reflexive, and which remain content to comply with the traditional stereotypes – what Adorno calls 'resigned art'. What is decisive for Adorno is the relationship of art to the 'crisis of meaning'. Authentic art rejects handed-down meaning through negation, to the effect that it appears to elevate meaninglessness itself in place of meaning, thereby becoming meaningful in spite of itself; resigned art affirms accepted meaning as if it were unproblematic, becoming itself the embodiment of reified consciousness. Adorno formulates this division in *Ästhetische Theorie* in terms that can serve as a point of reference for the ensuing discussion:

> The dividing line between authentic art that takes on itself the crisis of meaning and a resigned art consisting literally and figuratively of protocol sentences is that in significant works the negation of meaning itself takes shape as a negative, whereas in the others the negation of meaning is

stubbornly and positively replicated. Everything depends on this: whether meaning inheres in the negation of meaning in the artwork or if the negation conforms to the status quo; whether the crisis of meaning is reflected in the works or whether it remains immediate and therefore alien to the subject. (AT, 154)

While the concept of authenticity has a broad application within his aesthetics and his philosophy in general, it has a special focus for Adorno in relation to music. It is this focus I shall examine here. The concept is complex because, if one may risk such a metaphor, it is multidimensional. Keeping its different and opposing aspects in view at any one time is difficult, as one is compelled always to view the whole from a particular perspective, like walking around a large three-dimensional object where the experience of the totality is always partial and restricted and where a conception of the whole can only be pieced together later. Furthermore, there is also a historical dimension to the concept which demands attention, because here is to be seen the dynamic impulse of the concept of authenticity and its relation to Adorno's theory of the historical dialectic of musical material. What I am attempting to describe here is, of course, nothing more than the Hegelian underpinning to all Adorno's thinking – how to deal with contradiction in a manner which does not simply reduce it to a static formula but which also avoids losing a sense of the dynamic totality of Adorno's thought. To attempt to reveal this underlying dynamic structure of Adorno's thinking on authenticity, I first address the more familiar understandings of the term 'authenticity' in music through considering his critique of the historical performance and early music movement, then go on to what I see as the main topics of this essay: the concept of technical consistency as one cornerstone of Adorno's dialectical notion of authenticity; the ideological aspect of authenticity and consistency as false consciousness; and, finally, authenticity as self-reflexion, critique, and ultimately failure.[5]

1. AUTHENTICITY, HISTORICISM, AND ONTOLOGY

The term 'authenticity' has been hijacked in music by the historical performance movement in a manner that has all but obliterated any other understanding of it within musicology. While the focus of this

essay is not on early music, there is nevertheless a need to reforge the link present in Adorno's thinking between the positivistic notion of authenticity associated with the historical performance movement and the ontological concept of authenticity [*Eigentlichkeit*] associated in the first place with Heideggerian phenomenology.

In its most straightforward and everyday sense, the term 'authenticity' refers to 'the real thing', the original, the unique, as opposed to the illusory, the imitation, the reproduction, the fake, the counterfeit, or the mass produced. It is also associated with the authority that comes from the real as opposed to the illusory or fake. These everyday meanings are also part of Adorno's use of the term *Authentizität* but are given a turn toward conceptions of 'truth' and 'untruth' which are critical in orientation. In everyday terms, 'truth' can, of course, be taken reasonably simply as 'true to' something outside itself, loosely along the lines of correspondence theories of truth. This raises the question: true to what? One version is 'true to self', in the sense of inner expression of 'true identity', as implied in the aesthetics of expression. Another is 'true to roots', or 'true to origins', in the sense of 'This Delta blues player is authentic'. If understood in the purely positivistic sense of 'This painting is authentic, it is a genuine Chagall, it's not a fake', it boils down to a version of 'true to itself' as that unique material object that can be authenticated by subjecting it to scientific tests to prove that it is what it purports to be. More contentiously, the historical performance movement claimed, at least in its most fanatical years, that 'early music', to be authentic, must be performed on the original instruments with original tunings and performance conventions and using historically-researched performing editions to produce the sound as it would have been heard at the time of its composition – in brief, according to the composer's intentions. The contradictions arising from this position in relation to historical performance have been pretty thoroughly debated over the last half of the twentieth century and are now sufficiently well known not to require rehearsing here. The critiques of the movement have been particularly well represented in Richard Taruskin, Laurence Dreyfus, Joseph Kerman, and Peter Kivy.[6]

Adorno's 1951 essay 'Bach gegen seine Liebhaber verteidigt' ('Bach Defended against his Devotees') represents one of the earliest and most influential of the critiques of the historicizing tendency in the performance of early music. In it he argues that the positivism which

characterizes the historical performance movement (and lays claim to an objectivity of method reminiscent of the natural sciences) is combined with adherence to an ontology which gives to the object an aura of 'pure Being' [*Sein*] and has much in common with the phenomenology of Husserl, Heidegger, and Jaspers. This means that the notion of authenticity promoted by the early music movement (Adorno uses the aftermath of the bicentenary of Bach's death as the obvious occasion for his essay) has two aspects to it. The first, and perhaps most obvious, is the focus on authentic performance at the expense of the work itself. Adorno's critique of this tendency is polemical:

> Historicism has excited a fanatical interest that no longer concerns even the work itself. At times one can hardly avoid the suspicion that the sole concern of today's Bach devotees is to see that no inauthentic dynamics, modifications of tempo, oversize choirs and orchestras creep in; they seem to wait with potential fury lest any more humane impulse become audible in the rendition.[7]

Adorno is not seeking to defend the performance excesses of the Romantic rediscovery of Bach in the mid-nineteenth century and its consequences in the first half of the twentieth century (although he clearly has some sympathy for Schoenberg's remarkably opulent and 'inauthentic' orchestral arrangements of the master). His criticism is directed at what he sees as the spurious claim to objectivity and the identification of this with the original performance of the work at the time:

> What calls for refutation . . . is that of which the purists are most proud – their 'objectivity'. The only objective representation of music is one which shows itself to be adequate to the essence of its object. This, however, is not to be identified – as Hindemith, too, took for granted – with the idea of the historically first rendition. (P, 143)

He argues that the composer's view of his work cannot be taken as final and that it cannot be reconstructed. Furthermore – and this is very much part of Adorno's larger argument throughout his writings on music – he maintains that works cannot be identified with the limitations of particular performances or indeed with the conscious intentions of the composer. He writes, 'Authentic works unfold their truth content, which transcends the scope of individual

consciousness, in a temporal dimension through the law of their form' (P, 143). Adorno shifts the emphasis, therefore, from historical performance practice to the work itself and to what he calls its 'law of form' – that is, he moves from a discussion of authenticity of performance practice to authenticity of the work as a form of cognition. I shall return to a discussion of Adorno's concept of form in later sections. For the moment, however, it needs to be emphasized that he is proposing the idea of the work, not as static Being [*Sein*] outside history, but instead as an historical unfolding, as a Becoming [*Werden*]. This crucial distinction brings us on to the second aspect of Adorno's reading of the historicist approach to performance: the concept of Being.

Adorno argues in his Bach essay that, through an emphasis on its objectivity, Bach's music is elevated by the historicists to an abstract principle which transcends the individual subjectivity and which serves to close off any possibility of understanding the participation of his music in his time. By this Adorno means that Bach was also, in spite of his Pietism, a man of the Enlightenment who, through his music, took part in the rationalizing impulses of the Age of Reason. This contrasts with the historical performance movement's reduction of Bach to the status of a provincial church composer–craftsman. Adorno – in the context of the fashion for Heidegger in the 1950s – suggests that

> [t]he present function of his [Bach's] music resembles the current vogue of ontology, which promises to overcome the individualistic condition through the postulation of an abstract principle which is superior to and independent of human existence and yet which is free of all unequivocally theological content. They enjoy the order of his music because it enables them to subordinate themselves.... Bach is degraded by impotent nostalgia to the very church composer against whose office his music rebelled and which he filled only with great conflict. (P, 135)

According to Adorno's reading, therefore, the historicists have secularized Bach, then promptly elevated him to the status of 'universal Being' in a manner which bestows on him a theological authority to which they then subordinate themselves. This process reifies Bach and prevents the dynamic and progressive features of his music being understood. His music, reduced to static Being, represents the security of a bolthole from a threatening modern world and is

correspondingly mystified and becomes ideology in the sense of false consciousness. It is interesting to compare this interpretation with a section in *Negative Dialektik* (1966) which formulates the contradictory characteristics of the Heideggerian concept of *Eigentlichkeit*, normally also rendered in English as 'authenticity': '[T]he authenticity Heidegger misses will promptly recoil into positivity, into authenticity as a posture of consciousness – a posture whose emigration from the profane powerlessly imitates the theological habit of the old doctrine of essence.'[8] Adorno's critique of German Existentialism is to be seen in his book *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit* (1964; *Jargon of Authenticity*) as well as *Negative Dialektik*. While the fundamentals of this debate go right back to Adorno's work on Kierkegaard and Husserl in the 1930s, it is particularly in his critique of Stravinsky in *Philosophie der neuen Musik* that its relevance to music becomes apparent and that the two 'objectivities' of neo-classicism and historical performance can be seen to share a common ideology. This is not to say that Adorno regards Stravinsky as emulating Bach in any naïve way. In fact, the reverse is the case, as he portrays Stravinsky as the urbane and sophisticated manipulator of style, arguing that he 'succumbed to the temptation of imagining that the responsible essence of music could be restored through stylistic procedures', and that his intention was 'emphatically to reconstruct the authenticity of music – to impose upon it the character of outside confirmation, to fortify it with the power of being-so-and-not-being-able-to-be-otherwise' (PM, 136). Schoenberg's music, in contrast, is interpreted by Adorno in *Philosophie der neuen Musik* as, in a sense, provincial when compared to Stravinsky's urbanity, but at the same time radical in the manner in which it relates to the historically handed-down musical material. Schoenberg, in this interpretation, renounces the external gestures of 'authenticity' (that is, the attempt to stamp musical gestures with the authority of the past) and instead, through responding to the immanent demands of the material, achieves an 'authenticity of structure' characterized by what Adorno terms, significantly, 'immanent consistency' [*immanente Stimmigkeit*]. As he puts it,

> In so doing, this school [Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School] endangers almost every one of its own structures, but at the same time it gains, on the other hand, not only a more cohesive and instinctive artistic view,

but also a higher objectivity than that objectivism – an objectivity, namely, of immanent consistency – and, further, of the undisguised appropriateness to the historical situation. (PM, 214, translation amended)

2. AUTHENTICITY, AUTONOMY, AND CONSISTENCY

Thus Adorno identifies authenticity with the concept of consistency [*Stimmigkeit*] in connection with the way a work of art is structured. A work is structurally consistent [*stimmig*] to the extent that its structure is the full realization of its dominating idea (*Gedanke*, as Schoenberg uses the term). Adorno argues that 'the more authentic works of art are, the more closely do they follow the objective requirements of internal consistency'.[9] The 'truth' of a work in this sense corresponds to the philosophical conception of truth discussed by Adorno in *Negative Dialektik* as 'identity theory': That is to say, the idea of the work is identical to its structure, just as form is inseparable from content. In effect, the notion of consistency belongs at one level to that category of truth theories characterized by the coherence of a system consistent within itself rather than by correspondence to something outside itself. However, as we shall see, Adorno also goes on to disrupt this self-contained notion of authenticity as consistency to include a combination of both (that is, to incorporate also a version of the correspondence theory).[10]

The concept of consistency goes back a long way in the development of Adorno's thinking, and it played an important part in the debates he had with the composer Ernst Křenek in the late 1920s and early 1930s on musical material. In brief, these debates concerned the nature of the composer's relation to musical material: Křenek took the line that the composer was the sovereign creator who selected the material as needed from among all available possibilities, whereas Adorno's position was that the composer's choice was severely limited by the historical stage reached by the material and that not all possibilities were actually available. Indeed, he insisted that the material itself made historical demands on the composer to which the composer had no choice but to respond. Adorno also linked the concept of consistency to the idea of progress and progressiveness in relation to musical material – that is to say, those composers who responded to the objective demands of the handed-down material were progressive and, by implication, their music was

'authentic' (at this period he employed the term *echt*). In an article from 1930 which grew out of this debate, 'Reaktion und Fortschritt' ('Reaction and Progress'; Křenek wrote a companion article entitled 'Progress and Reaction'), Adorno argued that 'it is only in its immanent consistency that a work proves itself as progressive. In each work the material registers concrete demands, and the movement with which each new work manifests these is the sole obligatory shape [*Gestalt*] of history for the author. A work that meets these demands completely is consistent [*stimmig*].'[11] A further issue debated by Adorno and Křenek is whether musical material is to be regarded as of natural or of historical/cultural origin. Adorno argues that all that is meaningful in musical material is historical and social in origin and that indeed musical material is not 'nature' but is culturally preformed; thus, what the composer engages with when composing is sedimented history and society. He writes, 'Whatever nature might be to start with, it receives the seal of authenticity [*Echtheit*] from history. History enters into the constellation of truth.'[12]

All this has to be understood within the context of the notion of the fully autonomous work in Western art music, Carl Dahlhaus's 'idea of absolute music',[13] historically liberated from its functional origins. The work is 'true' to the extent that it is true to its structuring idea (that is, consistent) and to the extent that it is a response to the demands of the historically handed-down musical material. This is what constitutes the work's authenticity *at this level* – its genuineness, its truth to itself and to its material, given these terms of reference.

These are, of course, very different notions of authenticity and truth from those which occupy analytic philosophers. There, the main concerns are with authenticity and performance practice; composers' intentions and expression; the distinctions to be made between sincerity and authenticity; and the problem of originals, fakes, and copies. The concept of consistency receives scant attention. For the Hegelian Adorno, however, it provides an obvious starting point for a concept of truth, one which he sees as fundamental to any notion of authenticity. The concept of consistency is derived from Hegel's system of logic as put forward both in his *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1812) and in *Logik* (part 1 of the *Enzyklopädie*). Hegel writes, 'The study of truth, or, as it is here explained to mean, consistency [that is, the agreement of an object with our conception of it],

constitutes the proper problem of logic'.[14] It is a deceptively small step for Adorno to understand this in musical terms, given the longstanding conviction throughout the nineteenth century in German aesthetics and writing on music – from Wackenroder and the Schlegels through to Hanslick and Nietzsche – that music was itself a mode of cognition, a form of knowledge, albeit non-conceptual. At the same time, nevertheless, there are obvious problems with employing a notion like consistency, dependent as it is in Hegel's system on conceptualization, to account for a non-conceptual mode of experience like autonomous instrumental music. What would constitute 'truth' in such music and how would we recognize the 'authentic' work which embodied this truth? Hegel's account of 'truth' in his *Wissenschaft der Logik* makes the matter clear enough in relation to conceptual thought through emphasizing the inseparability of the act of thinking from truth: 'Truth is the agreement of thought with the object, and in order to bring about this agreement – for it does not exist on its own account – thinking is supposed to adapt and accommodate itself to the object.'[15] How can music achieve this? Hegel himself, like Kant, had no doubt that it could not, and he considered that 'independent music' without a text risked becoming empty and devoid of meaning because of its identity of form and content. In his *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (1835; *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*), he writes,

> The composer for his part can of course put into his work a specific meaning, a content consisting of ideas and feelings and their articulated and complete succession, but, conversely, he can also not trouble himself with any such content and make the principal thing the purely musical structure of his work and the ingenuity of such architecture. But in that case the musical production may easily become something utterly devoid of thought and feeling, something needing for its apprehension no previous profound cultivation of mind or heart.[16]

Hegel, like Kant, had little understanding of autonomous music – indeed, he happily acknowledged his limitations in this field – and never once mentioned anywhere in his writings the obvious paradigm case for such music: that of his exact contemporary, Beethoven. At the same time, both Hegel and Kant, through their immense joint influence on the thought of the nineteenth century, serve as a catalyst – one could even say a provocation – for the development

of an autonomous music which sees itself also as a form of cognition on a par with philosophical speculation. A brief excursus into the musical aesthetics of the nineteenth century will help provide the essential historical dimension at this point. The question is this: How does a mode of art like Western art music, regarded as a form of cognition *without concepts* and characterized by a condition of extreme autonomy, come to be the focus for a discussion of what it means to establish an authentic (that is, true) relation to the world?

Excursus 1: Art Music, Consistency, and the Autonomy Aesthetic

I suggest that this question has two aspects which can be usefully illuminated by juxtaposing certain ideas of Hanslick and Nietzsche. On the one hand, Eduard Hanslick, in his carefully argued *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (1854; *On the Musically Beautiful*), sought to refute the dominant expression aesthetic and to justify a self-contained musical logic as meaningful and consistent in itself (that is, without reference to anything outside itself and dispensing with metaphysical explanations). Hanslick's argument has had an enormous influence, not least on Adorno. His position, which, like Adorno's own, owes much to Hegel's logic but little to his thoughts on music as put forward in his *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, is clearly stated in Chapter 3 of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*:

> In music the concept of 'form' is materialized in a specifically musical way. The forms which construct themselves out of tones are not empty but filled; they are not mere contours of a vacuum, but a mind [*Geist*] giving shape to itself from within. . . . Music has sense and logic – but musical sense and logic. It is a kind of language which we speak and understand yet cannot translate. It is due to a kind of subconscious recognition that we speak musical 'thoughts' and, as in the case of speech, the trained judgment easily distinguishes between genuine thoughts and empty phrases. In the same way, we recognize the rational coherence of a group of tones and call it a sentence [*Satz*], exactly as with every logical proposition we have a sense of where it comes to an end, although what we might mean by 'truth' in the two cases is not at all the same thing.[17]

Hanslick's position offers the possibility of understanding the concept of consistency in relation to music through emphasizing the concept of form as the shaping of musical material by the mind

[*Geist*]. There is an emphasis on the 'rational coherence' of a work and on the idea of a purely immanent musical logic, all of which ties in well with the music theory and music pedagogy of the middle and second half of the nineteenth century.[18]

On the other hand, the problem of music's referentiality remains an issue with formalism and is not satisfactorily dealt with simply by arguing that musical works refer only to themselves in their unity of form and content and that they are meaningful because they are products of a mind shaping musical material. It can also be argued that the vestiges of music's preautonomous referentiality still remain and have themselves, with their extramusical origins, given shape and form to what Hanslick and his followers regarded as purely musical figures and gestures. Indeed, Richard Wagner calculatedly used the contrived conjunction of musical motif and extramusical gesture to develop the central structural feature of his music, the theory and practice of the leitmotif. Furthermore, this is clearly the origin of the position put forward by Friedrich Nietzsche in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (1878), where in aphorisms 215 and 216 he argues for a recognition of the historical process through which musical figurations, conventions, gestures acquire their apparently immanent musical meanings – that is, largely through former, but now naturalized, associations with drama, poetry, dance, and physical gesture:

> 'Absolute music' is either form in itself, at a primitive stage of music in which sounds made in tempo and at varying volume gave pleasure as such, or symbolism of form speaking to the understanding without poetry after both arts had been united over a long course of evolution and the musical form had finally become entirely enmeshed in threads of feeling and concepts.[19]

Adorno, who was greatly influenced by Nietzsche (to such an extent that he cited the whole of aphorism 215 in a lengthy footnote in *Philosophie der neuen Musik*),[20] had acknowledged this tendency as an aspect of the language character of music. For him it also encompassed the previous social function of music, now sublimated within the autonomous work and manifesting only as residual gestures. In *Versuch über Wagner* (1952), he considers the gestural dimension of absolute music:

> It is no doubt true that all music has its roots in gesture and harbours it within itself. In the West, however, it has been spiritualized and interiorized

into expression, while at the same time the principle of construction subjects the overall flow of the music to a process of logical synthesis; great music strives for a balance of the two elements.[21]

While this repressed heteronomy does not affect the capacity of the work to achieve consistency of form, it is a factor which nevertheless constantly threatens the self-enclosed autonomy of absolute music with the danger of disintegrating into its heteronomous elements. Adorno has Wagner in mind here when he argues that the very strategy which was designed to give the music dramas their large-scale sense of unity, coherence, and consistency – that is, the technique of the leitmotif – also threatens disintegration through too great an emphasis on the constant identity of the leitmotifs in spite of their constant transformations.

Thus the consistency of the work is achieved through domination of material which itself has a tendency to revert to its heteronomous origins. This negation of origins is one aspect of the ideological character of the technical consistency of the work. The other is that, as music achieved its historical autonomy through ever increasing rationalization of its material and its procedures toward total consistency, it also retreated from the outside world into its own inner, closed world. The epitome of this process for Adorno is the music of Brahms.

3. AUTHENTICITY, INAUTHENTICITY, AND IDEOLOGY

In *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Adorno expands on the extreme consistency of Brahms's music, including its principle of economy, the derivation of a multiplicity of ideas from a minimum of basic motivic material, and the inheritance of these processes by Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School: 'There is no longer anything which is unthematic, nothing which cannot be understood as derived from the identity [of the basic thematic material], no matter how latent' (PM, 57; translation amended). In *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie* (1962), however, he offers an ideology critique of these same features in the following terms:

That Brahms – like the entire evolution since Schumann, even since Schubert – bears the mark of bourgeois society's individualistic phase is indisputable enough to have become a platitude. In Beethoven the category of

totality still preserves a picture of the right society; in Brahms it fades increasingly into a self-sufficiently esthetic principle for the organization of private feelings. This is the academic side of Brahms. His music beats a mournful retreat to the individual, but as the individual is falsely absolutized over society Brahms's work too is surely part of a false consciousness – of one from which no modern art can escape without sacrificing itself.[22]

Thus Adorno's notion of authenticity can be understood as incorporating a further stage, a critique of self-enclosed consistency which opens it to that which lies beyond its autonomous sphere. Adorno writes, 'The consistency of art works is the aspect that enables them to share in the truth, but it also implicates them in falsehood' (EMS, 242). The notion of authenticity as consistency is also inadequate – indeed, it is ideological. As we have seen, the term 'ideology' is here to be understood both in the Hegelian sense of illusion or semblance (*Schein*) and in the Marxian sense of 'false consciousness' (that is, as referring to cultural forms which express the material relations of society in a way which embodies the interests of a dominant class while simultaneously concealing them). So at this level the consistency of the work and its integrated totality, its truth and authenticity, put forward initially as universal principles, are seen as false, as illusory, as *inauthentic*. However, read in a certain way, even the ideological moment of all art can also be seen as 'authentic', in that it acts as a critical commentary on the real material relations of society, whether it wishes to or not. As Adorno puts it in *Ästhetische Theorie*, 'A critical concept of society is inherent in all authentic art works and incompatible with how society conceives of itself' (AT[L], 335). This is because, in Adorno's terms, music contains social relations within its material and its structure, but unconsciously, so to speak, while at the same time positing an ideal set of relationships, instances of the relationship of part to whole, which is utopian and therefore acts as a criticism of the excluded real world. In this, I suggest, can be seen a juxtaposition rather than a combination of the coherence and the correspondence theories of truth. Furthermore, the autonomous musical work is ideological in another sense: Its autonomy is an illusion, given the commodity character of all art today as a result of the effects of the culture industry. Wagner is a good example here, and Adorno's critique of Wagner's music also attempts to discuss the composer in relation to commodity fetishism

and the Hollywood movie. Similarly there is the example of his much maligned and misunderstood critique of popular music and mass culture. A second brief excursus is relevant at this point to discuss the emergence of notions of authenticity, autonomy, and consistency in rock music and the discourses around it since Adorno and to see these in the context of an ideology critique.

Excursus 2: Rock Music and the Rise of Ideologies of Authenticity and Consistency

In spite of appearances, there are also moments when Adorno concedes that popular music contains a utopian 'promise of happiness', however much a product of the culture industry. Indeed, it is clear that a notion of authenticity underlies all value judgments in spite of current claims in cultural theory to have dispensed with the need for it by dismissing it as part of the mythologizing of the rock auteur by rock criticism. This has become particularly noticeable in discussions concerning rock music versus pop music, whether among rock academics, rock journalists, or rock fans. Not unexpectedly, the Adornian claim that authentic music resists commodification while inauthentic music embraces it plays a part here too and has become assimilated and internalized within the culture of rock music itself since the 1960s (in the 1950s, rock 'n' roll showed no interest in issues of authenticity, stars, fans, and music press alike happy to accept the music as entertainment). As Michael Coyle and Jon Dolan have observed,

> The concern to distinguish authentic rock from industry pabulum developed from sources antithetical to all that rock 'n' roll represented to its early audiences. On the one hand, the notion of authenticity derived from fiercely intellectual objections to the very nature of consumer culture. In particular, the attacks of German critical theorists Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin provided a rhetoric whereby to imagine a preindustrial, precommercial pastoral: to imagine forms of artistic expression that were the genuine expression of total forms of life. This rhetoric has been and remains broadly compelling.[23]

But in one very important respect, Coyle and Dolan seriously misrepresent Adorno when they suggest that his notion of authenticity depends on the image of 'a preindustrial, precommercial pastoral'. In

fact, Adorno locates authenticity in the unflinching encounter with the fragmentation and contradictions of modernity – that is, with the industrialized, rationalized urban world. Authenticity in rock music has certainly attached itself to the idea of 'roots' and, in particular, of 'folk', especially, as Coyle and Dolan have pointed out, through the intermediary of the college scene of the late 1950s and the early 1960s. In this respect, the so-called folk movement, with its legacy to rock music, has features in common with the search for 'rootedness' in tradition, folk, and community which characterized tendencies in the art music of the early twentieth century and the version of continuity and imposed consistency which went with them. I suggest that Adorno's ideology critique of this version of authenticity applies as much to popular music as it does to the 'early music' movement and to neoclassicism and folklorism. Furthermore, in the light of notions of authenticity which appeared during the 1960s, rock music has developed its own understandings of progress and reaction, of modernism and neoclassicism, of an avant-garde (dadaism, surrealism) and anticommodity aesthetic, and of a relation to a tradition of expectations and generic norms to be subverted. It is no exaggeration to suggest that rock music in this sense has risked retreating into its own form of autonomy as a consequence of growing older, coming of age, losing its exclusively youthful audience, and becoming one of a number of competing style-systems. It is in this context that one dares talk of 'consistency' as well as authenticity in relation to rock music. In support of this contention, I draw on the central argument put forward by Allan Moore in his book *Rock: The Primary Text*: 'What does serve to separate rock from other sorts of music is a degree of consistency which can be found within its musical rules and practices. This consistency can most clearly be discussed by invoking the concept of "style."'[24]

Simon Frith, in addressing the problem of value in rock aesthetics, attempts to step round the issue of authenticity while in the process paying his respects to Adorno:

> Rock music depends on myth – the myth of the youth community, the myth of the creative artist. The reality is that rock, like all twentieth-century pop musics, is a commercial form, music produced as a commodity, for a profit, distributed through mass media as mass culture. It is in practice very difficult to say exactly who or what it is that rock expresses or who, from the

listener's point of view, are the authentically creative performers. The myth of authenticity is, indeed, one of rock's own ideological effects, an aspect of its sales process: rock stars can be marketed as artists, and their particular sounds marketed as a means of identity. Rock criticism is a means of legitimating tastes, justifying value judgments, but it does not really explain how those judgments came to be made in the first place. If the music is not, in fact, made according to the 'authentic' story, then the question becomes how we are able to judge some sounds as more authentic than others, what are we really listening for in making our judgments? . . . The question of the value of pop music remains to be answered.[25]

Frith attempts to answer this question by assuming that the notion of authenticity in popular music is founded on the myth of expression – the expression of 'the "real" artist, emotion or belief lying behind it'.[26] He suggests that 'the question we should be asking is not what does popular music *reveal* about "the people" but how does it *construct* them.'[27] But this gets us only halfway toward an answer, because it uses a very limited concept of authenticity which does not recognize the extent to which the idea that music is exclusively about expression had already been seriously questioned in the 1850s. Moreover, Frith always considers 'music' in the most general and generic terms, never asking more detailed questions about the way in which music itself is also *constructed*. This unwillingness, or perhaps inability, to make a thoroughgoing connection between the constructedness of people and the constructedness of music is a weakness in his position, as it is also in other sociological approaches which ignore the fact that, whatever else it might be, a rock song is also a musical structure. The relation to commodification is itself a material one, inherent in the structure of the music, and not merely a matter of lyrics or function as social cement.

Rock academics, including Frith, who take an exclusively sociological perspective on popular music rightly criticize the tendency of musicologists and, in particular, music analysts to fetishize the musical object itself at the expense of its role as part of the context of identity construction. Consistency, the focus of technical analysis, *is* ideological, dependent as it is on a questionable autonomy aesthetic. At the same time, it is also significant: The technical makeup of the musical object, as well as its relation to other musical objects and to currently available musical material and technical means, is also an indicator of social relations mediated as musical-technical relations.

To ignore this is to place the music itself at the periphery as the mere occasion for the construction of identity rather than within the nexus of social relations.

I argue that Adorno's use of the term 'authenticity' focuses the tension between *consistency as truth* and *consistency as ideology*, an antagonistic relationship of opposites to which there can be no resolution at the level of the musical object and which leaves its traces as fractures in the structure of the work. The authentic work at this level manifests its truth content, to use Adorno's loaded term, as the objective problems of its form:

> In works of art immanent consistency and meta-aesthetic truth go to make up truth content. . . . Art works pose the problem of how the truth of reality can become the truth of art. . . . Society's discontinuities, its untruths and ideologies, emerge in the work as structural discontinuities, as deficiencies. This is so because the orientation of works of art, their 'stance towards objectivity', remains a stance towards reality. (AT[L], 395–6)

4. AUTHENTICITY, SELF-REFLECTION, AND CRITIQUE

At this level of the authenticity of a work as the sublation of its immanent structural consistency and of its ideological moment as the excluded, repressed social other, there is the further important feature already noted: The work functions also as a form of critique, as critical reflection. The question is, to what precisely does art address this critique? To society or to musical material? The answer is *both*. On the one hand, Adorno considers that 'authentic modern works are criticisms of past ones', and indeed he suggests that 'aesthetics becomes normative by articulating these criticisms' (AT[L], 492). But lest we mistake this as an argument for formalism pure and simple, Adorno also argues that society appears in musical material immanently. As he puts it in *Ästhetische Theorie*, 'The unresolved antagonisms of reality appear in art in the guise of immanent problems of artistic form. This, and not the deliberate injection of objective moments or social content, defines art's relation to society' (AT[L], 8). What this reading attempts to clarify is a complex problem in Adorno's aesthetics: that the autonomous, individual work of art can be simultaneously ideological (i.e., a manifestation of false consciousness, illusion, self-deception) and authentic (in the sense of

being a form of critical cognition, of critical reflection). Adorno formulates the problem thus: 'The fact that society "appears" in works of art both in an ideological and a critical manner is apt to lead to historico-philosophical mystification. Speculative thought is easily duped into thinking there is a pre-established harmony between society and works of art, courtesy of world spirit. Their true relation is different, however' (AT[L], 335). That is to say, their true relation is antagonistic, fragmented, and critical. The case of Mahler comes to mind here as an example of this problem and of Adorno's dialectical interpretation of it.

Autonomous artworks, according to Adorno, are like windowless monads in the Leibnizian sense. They contain society but are blind to their social content. Social forces and relations of production 'crop up in art because artistic labour is social labour and because an artistic product is a social product' (AT[L], 335). The difference between artworks and society lies in the way in which artworks turn away from society and operate with a different form of rationality even while being part of the dominant social forces and relations of production. Authentic works, in Adorno's terms, use extreme rationalization to dominate the handed-down material yet do so in a way which allows the repressed social content of the material to speak again, but now in purely musical terms within the closed world of the work. Such a notion of authenticity, however, whereby a work attempts to achieve consistency of form (which implies integration) through a critical relationship to the handed-down material (material which, since the period of the late Beethoven and Berlioz, has tended increasingly toward fragmentation and disintegration), leads to failure, according to Adorno – a kind of failure which is not simply the result of technical inadequacy on the part of the composer but rather comes from the impossibility of succeeding in the task to be faced, a task which must be undertaken nevertheless. This is what could be called 'truth to the historical demands of the material', in Adorno's terms, and it is an aspect of what he calls the 'truth content' of a work. The handed-down forms and schemata begin to lose their binding power. The historical thrust toward integration within autonomous music in the Western art tradition is taken to extremes – versions of it at different stages are to be seen in, for example, Beethoven, Wagner, Brahms, Schoenberg, and, of course, the multiple serialism of the 1950s as its *telos*, which also sees its final collapse. In the process,

total integration, indeed, autonomous music itself as a cultural form which grew up with and came of age in the 'bourgeois period' from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment to the mid-twentieth century and the end of aesthetic modernism, becomes revealed and is seen as illusion. Adorno attempts to formulate this dilemma as follows:

> Extreme integration is illusion pushed to the extreme. But there is a possibility of a reversal of the process: ever since the late Beethoven, those artists who had gone farthest along the road to integration were able to mobilize disintegration eventually. At this point in the career of an artist, the truth content of art whose vehicle was integration turns against art. It is precisely at these turning points that art has had some of its greatest moments. (AT[L], 67)

It is interesting to consider two examples of what Adorno means here in relation to authenticity and failure. First, in Adorno's book *Mahler: Eine musikalische Physiognomik* (*Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, 1960) we find the following remarkable passage: '[I]t is only in the moment of inauthenticity, which unmasks the lie of authenticity, that Mahler has his truth. . . . Objectively Mahler's music knows, and expresses the knowledge, that unity is attained not in spite of disjunction, but only through it.'[28] Adorno argues that Mahler's music reveals consistency as integration (which, as we have seen, is what can be regarded as constituting authenticity at the level of the autonomous work as an 'in-itself') to be an illusion – that is, as inauthenticity. And furthermore, through his structural, critical relationship to 'inauthentic', commodified, second-hand materials, he achieves a different level of authenticity.

The second example is from Adorno's unfinished Beethoven book, *Beethoven: Philosophie der Musik*, the fragments of which were first published in German in 1993:

> Art works of the highest rank are distinguished from the others not through their success – for in what have they succeeded? – but through the manner of their failure. For the problems within them, both the immanent, aesthetic problems and the social ones. . . . are so posed that the attempt to solve them must fail, whereas the failure of lesser works is accidental, a matter of mere subjective incapacity. A work of art is great when it registers a failed attempt to reconcile objective antinomies. That is its truth and its 'success': to have come up against its own limit. In these terms, any work of art which succeeds through not reaching this limit is a failure.[29]

And he continues: 'This theory states the formal law which determines the transition from the "classical" to the late Beethoven, in such a way that the failure *objectively* implicated by the former is disclosed by the latter, raised to self-awareness, cleansed of the appearance of success and lifted, for just this reason, to the level of philosophical succeeding' (BPM, 100). A more polished version of these fragments appears in the essay 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk: Zur *Missa Solemnis*' (1959; 'Alienated Masterpiece: the *Missa Solemnis*'):

> The late Beethoven's demand for truth rejects the illusory appearance of the unity of subjective and objective, a concept practically at one with the classicist idea. A polarization results. Unity transcends into the fragmentary. In the last quartets this takes place by means of the rough, unmediated juxtaposition of callow aphoristic motifs and polyphonic complexes. The gap between both becomes obvious and makes the impossibility of aesthetic harmony into the aesthetic content of the work; makes failure in a highest sense the measure of success. In its way even the *Missa* sacrifices the idea of synthesis.[30]

What is ultimately significant for Adorno is the nature of the subject-object relation within musical works. This is, of course, a dominant theme running through *Philosophie der neuen Musik* and is the decisive factor in Adorno's assessment of Schoenberg in relation to Stravinsky in that book. Music, as a particular version of the externalization and objectification of subjectivity, is seen as a sublimated, or repressed, relation to society in its interaction with its material. The historical grounds for such an alienated relationship, where art ends up both as an unconscious recording of history and as an attempt to escape it through positing a utopian alternative, provide the poles for Adorno's field of enquiry. In the fragmented work, the work whose self-reflexivity is a result of 'coming of age', Adorno sees authenticity in the failed attempt to achieve coherence, integration, and consistency in a fractured world.

NOTES

1. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Athlone Press, 1997), 23. Hereafter cited as AT.
2. Trevor Wishart, for instance, insists that 'the use of the words "authentic" and "true" simply imply an evaluative position for Adorno as critic

which transcends the social situation' ('On Radical Culture', in John Shepherd et al., *Whose Music? A Sociology of Musical Languages* [New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1977], 235).

3. Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (London: Sheed and Ward, 1973), 136. Hereafter cited as PM.
4. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Jene zwanziger Jahre,' in *Eingriffe, Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10, pt. 2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 506 (my translation). English translation on p. 48 of Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
5. In sections of this essay, I elaborate and extend a theoretical model developed in my books *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 52–64, and *Adorno, Modernism and Mass Culture* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1996), 71–80; the model has its origins in a review article, 'Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*', *Music Analysis* 6, no. 3 (1987): 355–77.
6. Richard Taruskin, 'On Letting the Music Speak for Itself', *Journal of Musicology* 1 (1982): 338–49; Laurence Dreyfus, 'Early Music Defended against its Devotees', *Musical Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (1983): 297–322; Joseph Kerman, 'The Historical Performance Movement', in *Musicology* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1995), 182–217; Peter Kivy, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1995).
7. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Bach Defended against his Devotees', *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber (London: Neville Spearman, 1967), 142–3. Hereafter cited as P.
8. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 113.
9. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Christian Lenhardt (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 288. Hereafter cited as AT[L].
10. Mattias Martinson has characterized these theories as follows: 'The spectrum of truth-theories can be characterized as having one extreme point in the notion of correspondence and the other extreme point in coherence. Truth then becomes a function of (1) thought's correspondence to objects, (2) the coherence of a system of thought, and (3) combinations of these two options' (*Perseverance without Doctrine: Adorno, Self-Critique, and the Ends of Academic Theology* [Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000], 65).
11. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Reaktion und Fortschritt,' in Theodor Adorno and Ernst Křenek, *Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), 176 (my translation).

12. Adorno, 'Reaktion und Fortschritt', 179 (my translation).
13. Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
14. G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, pt. 1, *Logic*, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 41.
15. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), 44.
16. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 2, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 954.
17. Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, trans. Geoffrey Payzant (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Publishing, 1986), 30.
18. A. B. Marx, a central figure in the development of music theory in the nineteenth century and a fervent Hegelian in his thinking, wrote in his essay 'Form in der Musik' (1856), '[A]bove all, then, let us hold fast to this: even in music, form is a necessary thing; it is ... the expression of the rational spirit coming to consciousness and elevating itself to reason – and it is not something arbitrary, not something that imposes itself from without' ('Form in Music', in *Musical Form in the Age of Beethoven: Selected Writings on Theory and Method*, ed. and trans. Scott Burnham [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 62).
19. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human; A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 99.
20. See Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 138–9 n. 3.
21. Theodor W. Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 1981), 34–5 (translation amended).
22. Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 63–4. Hereafter cited as EMS.
23. Michael Coyle and Jon Dolan, 'Modelling Authenticity', in *Reading Rock and Roll: Authenticity, Appropriation, Aesthetics*, ed. Kevin J. H. Dettmar and William Richey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 26.
24. Allan F. Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text* (Buckingham, England: Open University Press, 1993), 1.
25. Simon Frith, 'Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music', in *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, ed. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 136–7.
26. Frith, "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music," 137.
27. Frith, "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music," 137.
28. Theodor W. Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 32–3.

29. Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 99–100 (translation amended). Hereafter cited as BPM.
30. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Verfremdetes Hauptwerk: Zur *Missa Solemnis*', *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 17 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), 159 (my translation). English translation: 'Alienated Masterpiece: The *Missa Solemnis*', *Telos*, no. 28 (summer 1976): 113–24.